

MEMPHIS HISTORY
INTERVIEW WITH BEN BAKER

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER BETTY WILLIAMS
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
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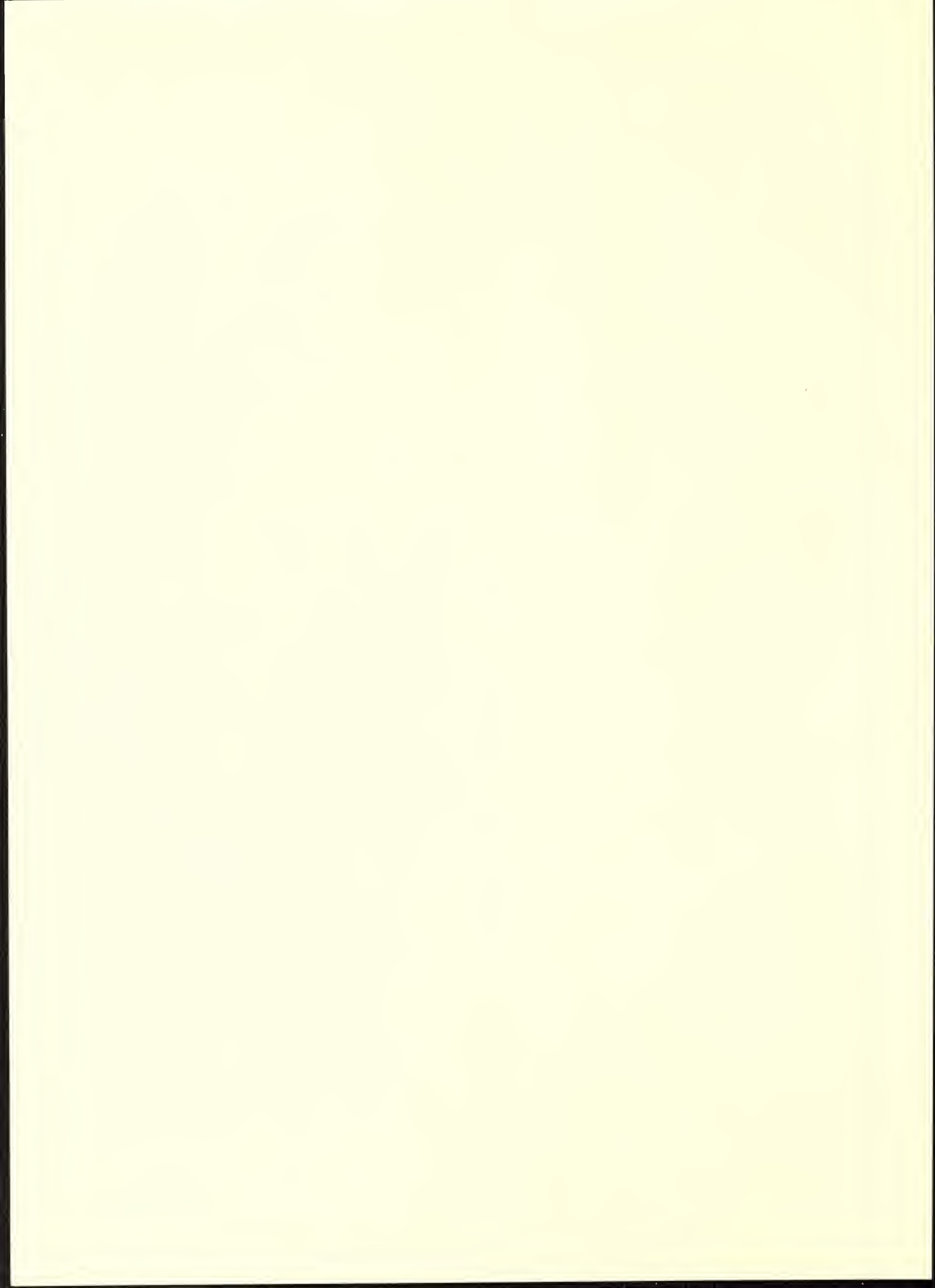
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PLACE Memphis, TN
DATE Jan. 21, 1986

Ben Baker

(INTERVIEWEE)

Charles W. Crawford

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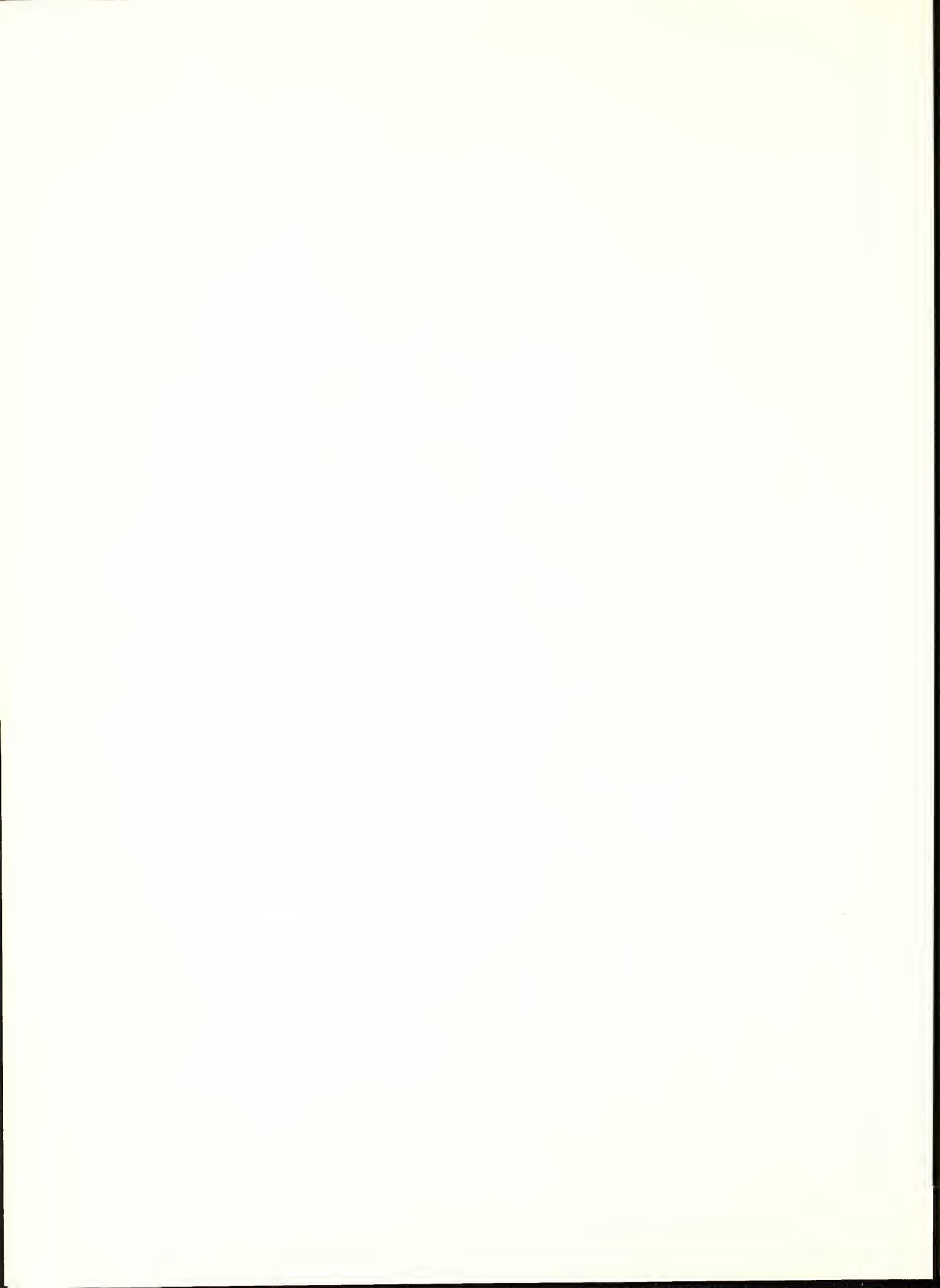
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MEMPHIS HISTORY
INTERVIEW WITH MR. BEN BAKER
JANUARY 21, 1986

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS HISTORY." THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. BEN BAKER AND MAJOR BEN SCHULTZE. THE DATE IS JANUARY 21, 1986. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY YVONNE PHILLIPS.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Baker, if we can, let's start early and get up toward the present. I don't think you were born in Memphis. Where were you born and what happened before you moved to here?

MR. BAKER: In McNairy County. I started to school when I was six years old in 1926. And I started to Guthrie School over in North Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that means you have moved to Memphis from McNairy County.

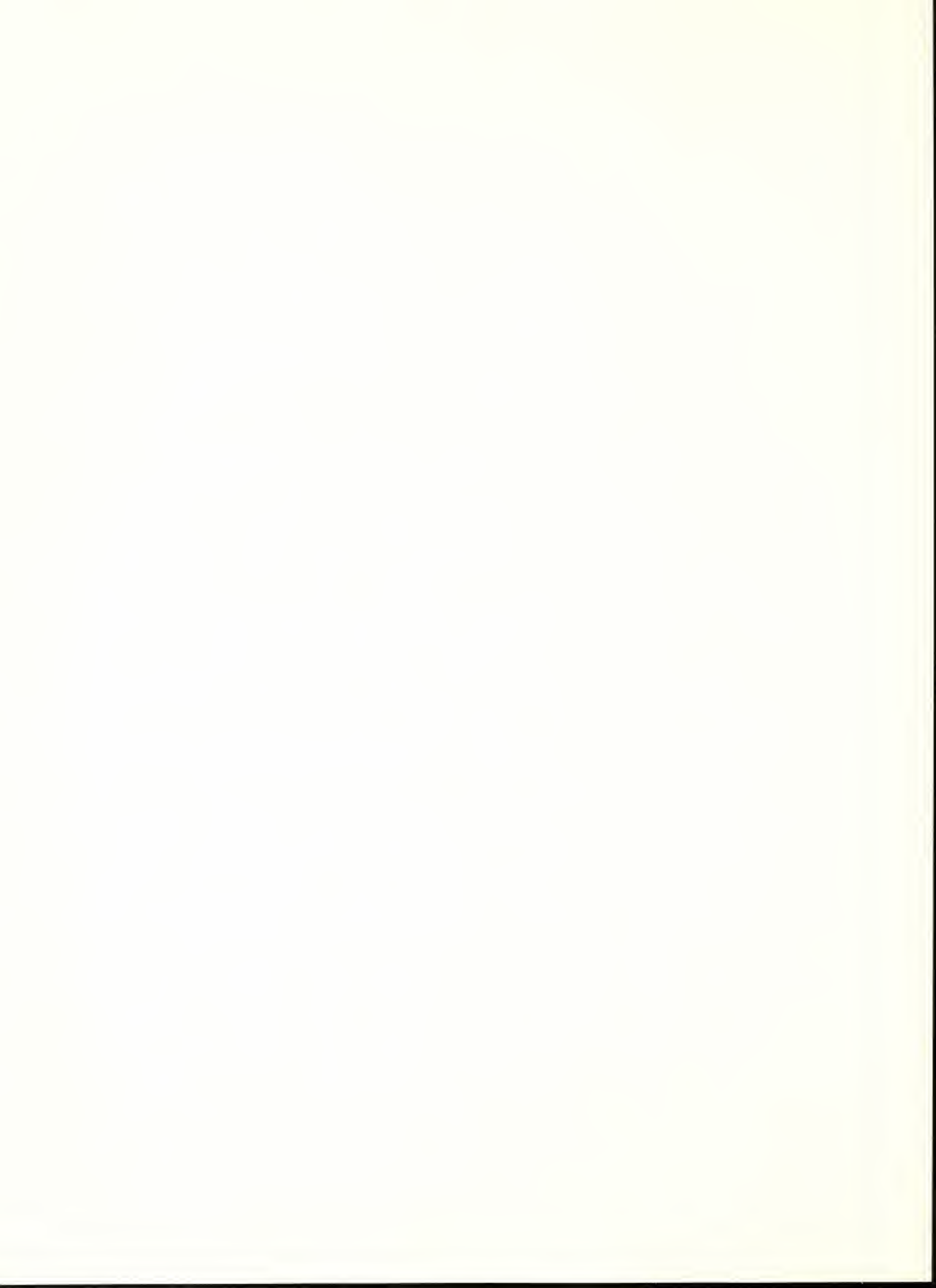
MR. BAKER: Sometime between 1920 and '26. I guess maybe I was three or four years old then.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember the move?

MR. BAKER: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you living then, Mr. Baker?

MR. BAKER: When we moved to Memphis? Over on Chelsea and Breedlove on Kney Street there.



DR. CRAWFORD: And you started over at Guthrie in 1926.

MR. BAKER: Nineteen twenty-six, that's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: What size was the school then?

MR. BAKER: You know, it seemed like an awful big school to me, but I've driven by there here right lately and it's a small school now. At the time, it seemed like a big school. I don't know how many students we had in there. I just remember that they had in there a wading pool out on the playground and we lived pretty close to the school. And, we'd walk down and get in the wading pool. And, oh boy, that was a time, you know!

DR. CRAWFORD: It sounds like you were fortunate to live that close to the school.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right. Real fortunate. There was the Leath Orphanage Home. I think it's still over there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, they call it Porter-Leath now.

MR. BAKER: Yes, well, they used to have an Easter egg hunt there. I can remember that as a boy.

Boy, and if you found a gold egg, you got a prize. And I can remember as a little boy going down there. And, oh gosh, I had brothers. And we'd have a time looking for those Easter eggs. They'd have them colored and they had hid them out there. It was a big wooded area there.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think they still have it. Not as big as it used to be. But that building is still there.

Leath Orphanage or Porter-Leath now.



MR. BAKER: Six years. 'Til I started to Humes and I think, I went there about half a year. Then we moved to the country.

DR. CRAWFORD: You say you moved to the country. You didn't have to go very far to get to the country then, did you?

MR. BAKER: No, well, back to Selmer.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, you went back to McNairy County.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right. For about a year and then that's when my Dad got the store over here on Barksdale. That was in 1933.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was that on Barksdale?

MR. BAKER: At Barksdale and Nelson--833 S. Barksdale--corner of Nelson.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is the building still there now?

MR. BAKER: The building's still there. It's still operating as a grocery store. It's a small building about about 5,000 square foot building. But, we sold the business in 1982.

DR. CRAWFORD: By that time, you had other stores though.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right. We had other stores much bigger than that. That was just a small store.

DR. CRAWFORD: But that was the first one?

MR. BAKER: Yes, that was the first store. That's true.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was in the '30's sometime, wasn't it, Mr. Baker?



MR. BAKER: Yes, 1933 was when we started.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your start in the grocery business was in the lowest years of the Depression and it was pretty brave.

MR. BAKER: Well, I think I can hear my dad say that stock took about \$700 worth of groceries to stock it then. But back in those days, you didn't have frozen foods and a lot of items that they didn't have then. I can remember when they started to come out with baby food in those little cans the first year.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of stock did you have at first? A lot of it was canned and some dried things.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right. We had canned corn, canned beans and everything that was before and they didn't price mark things back in them days. Everybody knew a can of corn was a dime, see. Can of beans, a dime.

DR. CRAWFORD: Not many different sizes, did they?

MR. BAKER: No, just a couple of sizes. No and not the variety and not the brands. But I can remember the chicken coop. We used to have live chickens. All the stores used to have chickens.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you used to keep them? Was it in the store or outside?

MR. BAKER: We'd roll them out. We had the coops--about three or four coops--one on top of another.

And they were on wheels and you'd roll them out to the front of the store. At night when you closed up, you would roll it



in. And they had a little feed trough on the side and a place to water them. Somebody would come up and want a fresh hen. They'd go out and pick out the one they want. And you take it out and go to the back room and wring its neck. And then they had a little gas jet there with water on it. Take a gallon bucket of water and dip the hen down in there and pick it, the butcher would. Right there at the store. And you had a fresh chicken.

DR. CRAWFORD: And people knew it was really fresh then!

MR. BAKER: They'd take it home and dress it at home.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, who was your wholesaler then? Where did you get the things you sold?

MR. BAKER: Malone and Hyde. Malone and Hyde was in business then. Matter of fact, I think Malone & Hyde started and they've had their hundredth anniversary, I believe.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe I saw that.

MR. BAKER: Seventy-five years, just a few years ago. I think Malone & Hyde maybe started in business around 1908 or something like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who else was in the suppliers' business beside Malone & Hyde?

MR. BAKER: You know, I can remember there was another wholesaler. There was Carradine-Karsh .

There was a lot of wholesalers back then. Little, small wholesalers--Carradine-Karsh and Davis-Myers--I believe were there.



DR. CRAWFORD: Did you keep a very large inventory then?

MR. BAKER: No, actually it wasn't a variety that we have nowadays in the store. You'd have corn flakes and oatmeal and maybe one or two sizes of each one of them. Canned beans, green beans and canned corn, baby food. And of course, you'd have toilet paper and napkins. Just didn't take as much store. Land, there was a little grocery store on just about (two or three) on lots of the corners. Up there on Cooper and Young, I think there were five grocery stores at one time when they were small. Jack Stepherson's was up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: The building is yet up there on that corner.

MR. BAKER: Yeah, right. Several buildings up there yet.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember anything special you sold then that you don't get now? I know things have changed. You got a lot of new products. But did any of the old ones disappear?

MR. BAKER: I can remember selling coal oil, kerosene I think they call it nowadays. We called it coal oil and we delivered it. We did a big delivery business on bicycles. I rode bicycles. And we had a big drum in the back that had one of these turn things on it that you'd draw the kerosene out--the coal oil--we called it. Put your can under it and it drewed it up 'til you got a gallon. We had as big as a five gallon can and you'd get one of these red Irish potatoes and stick on the spout to keep it from. . .



DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, that was the cork then.

MR. BAKER: Uh-huh. And we delivered that and we delivered eggs. The eggs weren't in the carton. But they had these wooden cartons that a dozen fit in. And you had cardboard to fit over them and that's the way they delivered eggs in a wood carton. And when you take them to the customer's house, they take them out. Turn the carton over and lift it up and all the eggs would be in the tray, you know--on the top tray.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you'd take the box back.

MR. BAKER: That's right. Used that box over and over.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was there anything else special you sold then, they don't have now? I know coal oil is gone. Well, they sell it now in service stations. But it costs as much as gasoline now.

MR. BAKER: Yes, I think I saw a sign where they're getting a dollar a gallon for coal oil. And we sold about two gallons for a quarter, I think, or ten cents a gallon. And people used it in their homes. They cooked on it. In fact, I can remember we had a coal oil stove that we cooked on.

DR. CRAWFORD: And used in lamps in some places, you know.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right, where they didn't have electricity. I can remember the ice man. Now in the store in 1933, we were using ice in the big meat cooler. We had a man that could handle a 300 lb. block of ice on his back. Just take it in and put it up in that thing. Up high,



you know. He'd get it in there. He'd get couple 300 lb. blocks in there. It was a big meat cooler. I can remember that. That's how they kept the meat. There wasn't any mechanical refrigeration. That was before it came in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Anyone who could handle a 300 lb. cake of ice had to be a pretty good worker.

MR. BAKER: He was strong! But I can remember back in those days they had the ice trucks going up and down the streets. We'd all get out and meet the ice truck. As boys, I can remember back over in North Memphis when the ice man would chip the ice off and the ice would fall off and we'd get that ice. Yeah, that was good!

DR. CRAWFORD: You appreciated it. There wasn't any air-conditioning.

MR. BAKER:: No, that was a real treat.

DR. CRAWFORD: They would deliver ice by the block to people in their houses, wouldn't they?

MR. BAKER: Yes. They'd give you a sign-card and it would say "25, 50, 75, 100", the amount you want. If you wanted a 25-lb. block of ice, you'd put it on your front door. And the ice man coming along--or you put it in your front window--would see it and know you'd want a 50 lb. block of ice. They had that thing fixed so the ice pick, they could jab it up. It was pre-cut partly.

DR. CRAWFORD: Split it up into 25 or 50 pounds?

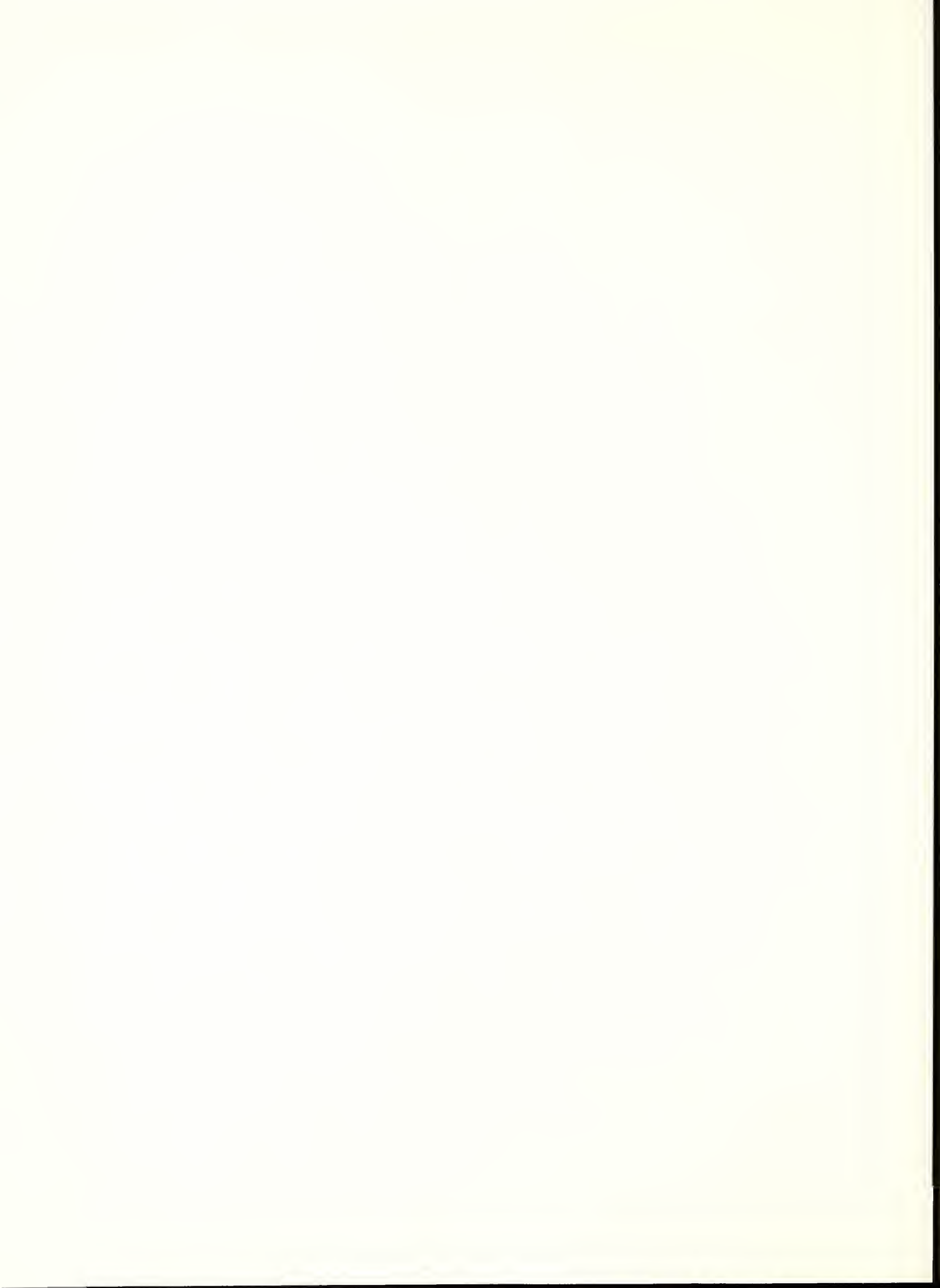
MR. BAKER: He'd have these tongs and he'd bring it in and put it in your box. Lot of people did that



and they'd leave the money on their ice box. They'd have it usually on the back porch and they'd have the money and the ice man would come and they wouldn't know when he came. He'd just know to bring it on back and put [it] in the ice box. Back then, to drain it as the water melted, they had a drain in the bottom of the box and you'd bore a hole in the floor and it'd drip through to the ground outside. I can remember that very well.

DR. CRAWFORD: It seems to me that a card was sort of square and you'd put the corner up--25, 50 or whatever you wanted and they'd deliver that. Ben (Ben Schultze) what do you remember about this?

MAJ. SCHULTZE: The ice was made in 350 lb. blocks. But the top 50 was normally white where the water came up from it. I worked for the Davis Coal and Ice Company. And these 300 lb. blocks would be easy to handle because you didn't pick up the block. You put the tongs in it and you just picked up that much. Two-thirds of the weight was still on the floor. It has been said, it was serrated and the serrations were caused by the tank where they put the water in to make the ice. It had a little indentation and it serrated that ice. You could clip it off in hundred-pound blocks and chip it off in 50 (lbs.). Now, the 25 lb. blocks wasn't serrated. In 1938, we had a price war and 25 lb. ice blocks were selling for a nickle. And I worked for Davis Coal and Ice Company in the summertime from six in the morning til seven at night, seven days a week for



\$10 a day. But the card, he (Mr. Baker) was talking about was a square card, but the ice was on it 35-40 . That's where you got your triangle from that you were talking about. Also, the hole that you cut in the floor of the ice box, sometimes people didn't do that. Because rodents and things would get in there. So they put a dishpan or a pan under there. But you took the water from there and poured it on the flowers because it was pure and distilled water.

DR. CRAWFORD: You didn't waste anything.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: You didn't waste it back in those days. And the ice man would come in there and find the money on top of the ice box and he'd come in the back door. You think of people leaving their back door open now! He'd come in the back door and put the ice in there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Leave the money out?

MR. BAKER: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: People were more honest, I guess, in general then, weren't they? Some of them anyway?

MR. BAKER: On growing up as boys, I can remember we didn't have to lock our doors. We just go in the house. I don't think any of us had keys to the house. We just go and come.

DR. CRAWFORD: Crime doesn't sound like much of a problem then.



MR. BAKER: Wasn't. Sure wasn't.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was in the 30s mostly, wasn't it?

MR. BAKER: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Memphis had a different situation then. Mr.

Crump was active, you know. And they had a different kind of order of law in town. And I've heard people say they left their cars unlocked, too.

MR. BAKER: Oh yeah. We never locked our car. In fact, we'd leave the keys in the car! I don't think anybody ever lost a car as I can remember. They just didn't steal them then.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think that was then?

MR. BAKER: I don't know. I don't know why people or why crime has gotten so bad. I think the punishment used to be kind of a disgrace to go to jail. But now, it doesn't seem like it means anything much anymore.

DR. CRAWFORD: And a lot of those people don't get sent. And some of the ones that do, get out in a hurry it seems like.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: And we had a female juvenile court judge, Judge Camille Kelly. She read the riot act to you. You were too afraid to do anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: That sort of kept some of the young people in line.

MR. BAKER: I guess maybe people had us all afraid. You weren't going to do anything.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: And you went to church and Sunday School on Sunday, and not bowling and picture shows and things like that. [They] had blue laws in Memphis, remember?

MR. BAKER: That's right. And there wasn't any picture shows open. I can remember when they started opening those on Sunday.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: And when they did, I couldn't go anyhow.

DR. CRAWFORD: Not everything was closed down.

MR. BAKER: Well, I think they started uptown, the best I remember. And they had the eating place in conjunction with it. And if you went in there to eat, then you could go in the show. Some way they got around it. If you bought something, they let you go in the show. Some way they worked it. I don't know. I was real small. In the 30s picture shows were our main entertainment.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know you still see some of the re-runs on television now.

MR. BAKER: That's right. Some of those old pictures were good.

DR. CRAWFORD: What sort of city leadership did the city have? I know Mr. Crump was generally in charge at that time. Did things work pretty well? Did the laws seem to get enforced?

MR. BAKER: Yes, I remember when we had a Safety Commissioner, or whatever they call it now, Boyle. You remember him?



DR. CRAWFORD: Joe Boyle?

MR. BAKER: Yes, Joe Boyle. And they said you better not honk your horn. He stopped them from that. You know everybody used to lay down on the horns in their cars.

DR. CRAWFORD: They still do--New York and some cities.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: And the speed limit was 30 miles an hour and the police would arrest the ambulance drivers for going over 30.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about packaging, Mr. Baker? I expect they packaged things sold in the store a lot different then. Did they use wooden boxes much? You don't see that anymore.

MR. BAKER: Yes, there was more wood. Back in those days, we weighed up everything in the store. This is back in the 20s now. But I can remember going down to the store over there in North Memphis on Chelsea and Breedlove. It was a Bowers store, and my daddy managed that store. And he managed the store when Kroger bought them out along about 1930, '31 somewhere in there. That's when Kroger first come to Memphis with their stores.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: "You won't get bit if you bought from Mr. Bowers."

MR. BAKER: That's right. They used to have a little jingle, "You won't get bit if you buy from Mr. Bowers." And they had a bulldog on the sign. Of course, they had a lot of stores, and they were all small.



DR. CRAWFORD: And you used more wooden boxes then, didn't you?

MR. BAKER: Yes, right. Lot of stuff come in wood. As a matter of fact, we got apples in wooden boxes. Oranges came in wooden boxes. Eggs were in wooden crates.

DR. CRAWFORD: Cheese, they sold in wooden boxes.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you do the advertising any?

MR. BAKER: Uh-huh. We used to put out circulars, go from door to door you know, what we call handbills.

[We] had them printed up with the specials on them and we'd hire these boys. In fact, I did that a lot of times! [I'd] go from door to door and leave one of those ads printed up with the specials on them in the neighborhood. And they'd run an ad in the newspaper too.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you advertise in, The Commercial Appeal?

MR. BAKER: Yes, and I believe it was called the Appeal back then. I believe we had two papers, the Press-Scimitar and the Evening Appeal.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did your business build up as time went on?

MR. BAKER: Yes, right, come right along. We opened that store at Quince and Perkins must have been 25 years ago. So that was 1950, early fifties.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was definitely there in '62.



MR. BAKER: Yes, I forgot the year we opened that one.

And then we got the one out on North Watkins.

And the one in Parkway Village on Perkins and the one at Quince and White Station.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you call them?

MR. BAKER: Big Star--Big Star Stores.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did the name "Big Star" start?

MR. BAKER: Malone & Hyde started that. They owned the name to it, I think. They started here in Memphis. And started giving Quality stamps--trading stamps. They were first. That was the start with them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did that come about in the '50s?

MR. BAKER: Yes, about then.

DR. CRAWFORD: I remember the first time I ever saw them. It was about the '50s. Took awhile to get used to.

MR. BAKER: Yeah. That's about when they started and stamps were a big thing. They're still a big thing. But I think the pulling power is not as great on stamps as it was when they started. Something new and different, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Don't they use them less now than ten to twenty years ago?

MR. BAKER: I think so. I don't think there's as many places giving stamps now, trading stamps, as a few years back.



DR. CRAWFORD: I just know of a few.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Refresh my memory. Let me ask a question.

The man that bragged about being the "godfather"--Cianciola. Anyhow, there's one person who lived two doors down the street from me. He died about ten years ago--Lybrand French.

MR. BAKER: Oh, I didn't know he died.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: He died about ten years ago. He bought back during the war.

MR. BAKER: Yes, he was hard of hearing.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: He and his brother both, Charles.

MR. BAKER: Right, Charles. Is Charles still living?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yeah, Charles and myself graduated from William R. Moore together. Well, he graduated the year after I did. But, they used to leave their Atwater-Kent radio on, you could hear it a block away! Leave the window down in the summertime.

MR. BAKER: I didn't know you knew them, the French boys.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Lived three doors down from me on Kendale.

Anyhow, I was just refreshing your memory about the grocery business. To me, the grocery business was fascinating. I don't know why I never went in it. I guess I never knew anybody in it.

MR. BAKER: Well, everybody had to eat. That was the focal point. But do you know what I liked about the grocery store? Sauerkraut! Did you ever eat kraut



you get in those big barrels? I guess 50 gallons. And they were wood.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Smell that over the whole store when you opened it up.

MR. BAKER: And was it good! Now, you get it in little cans. I doubt there's kraut made like that anymore. They were in wooden kegs--pretty good sized ones. We used to sell barrels, wooden barrels of flour.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: And you'd buy cookies loose. And put them in great big containers. And you buy two pounds of cookies for--they didn't come packaged like they are now.

DR. CRAWFORD: And the flour was sold in barrels. You could buy a big barrel of flour.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: You could buy a barrel or a big sack. Yeah, they started bagging it then.

MR. BAKER: That's right. About 1930 you could get a barrel of flour then.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: You had big families then. They did a lot of baking.

MR. BAKER: A.C. Cole Milling Company.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: You didn't buy a lot of bread in the stores in those days. Taystee and Colonial was here.

But that was about all. Wonder, Taystee and Colonial were the three bread companies in Memphis when I was a kid growing up. Bakeries used to come by and deliver fresh bread in a wagon like the ice man come by. And as soon as he went and put some ice in the house, you were out there in the back of



his wagon trying to get a little chip to eat in the summer-time.

MR. BAKER: Can you remember when we had the sanitation department that had the horses and the big mules to the wagon?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: And they had a gallon of deodorant. They'd pour a few drops in your (garbage) can. They went and got the can and walked way down and dumped it. When they untied the mule, the wagon dumped. The mule kept the wagon. If you got too much you could see that mule would kinda bounce it off.

MR. BAKER: That's right.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: At Christmas time the old garbage man would come around. Of course, this is racism. The Black people would think that. But, he'd come around. Well, we hardly had anything around our house to drink except at Christmas. My uncle would have a bottle of something. And he'd (garbageman) have a bottle with him. And you'd pour a shot of it--if it was gin or whiskey or what--of course, he'd get the tie you didn 't want for Christmas. He'd have on three or four ties. He'd come 'round the back door and say, "you know who I is! I's yo' garbage man." He had an old mule.

MR. BAKER: That's right. Every Christmas.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: You had your garbage dumps scattered all over. I can take you right now to half a dozen



places with big, beautiful homes built on a garbage dump right now.

DR. CRAWFORD: They used to have little city dumps instead of one big one.

MR. BAKER: I don't remember where they dumped that stuff.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: I lived across the street from one over on Mc-Lemore's for awhile.

MR. BAKER: I guess you did! But I guess you remember. .

MAJ.SCHULTZE: The wind blowing your way.

MR. BAKER: But I can remember those cartage mules.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yeah. The old mule. And his sides were all worn and they looked like they never fed the d--- things.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was in the 30's then?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: I've seen pictures of them.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Oh, he's (garbage man) is up on it. The wagon sat way up. He had a couple of steps to get up to it. Well, he got your can and dumped it in there and brought it back. Boy, that was something.

MR. BAKER: I guess that was in the 20s. I cannot remember in 1933, now but we were on Barksdale and Nelson and they didn't have them I don't believe. But the streetcar used to run on those two rails right down the middle of the street. It turned on Central there. Right down the middle were the two tracks. One come and one going.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: It turned on Young going to the Fairgrounds.

MR. BAKER: Right, sure did. Turned around at the Fairgrounds and headed back.

DR. CRAWFORD: Most of the town was inside the Parkways.

MR. BAKER: That's right.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Those that lived outside the Parkways lived in the suburbs. They were country people so to speak. Many of them had pigs and chickens and a cow in their backyards back in those days. Of course, you could raise chickens and rabbits right there in your own backyard. Even during the war you could do that. The ordinance said you couldn't, but the enforcers never even bothered about that during the war. You had a victory garden, you had chickens, rabbits and pigs.

MR. BAKER: You talking about WWII in the 40s?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yeah, I wasn't talking about WWI, dadgummit!
(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: They were encouraging that kind of thing then.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Oh yes--victory gardens.

MR. BAKER: Back in the 20s and 30s, we all had chickens in the backyard.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Sure, we had rabbits. Rabbits were good meat, cooked right.

DR. CRAWFORD: You don't get any of that in the stores now, do you?



MR. BAKER: No, I don't know. . .

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Let's take the store where we met today. If you go through that store today and if you could go through a store in let's see, fifty years ago [that] would be '35. If you could go back sixty years ago, you wouldn't even think they were grocery stores. [It's] so completely changed. People didn't want to walk all over grocery stores and pick up stuff and put it in baskets. Didn't have any.

MR. BAKER: Well, they didn't have shopping carts.

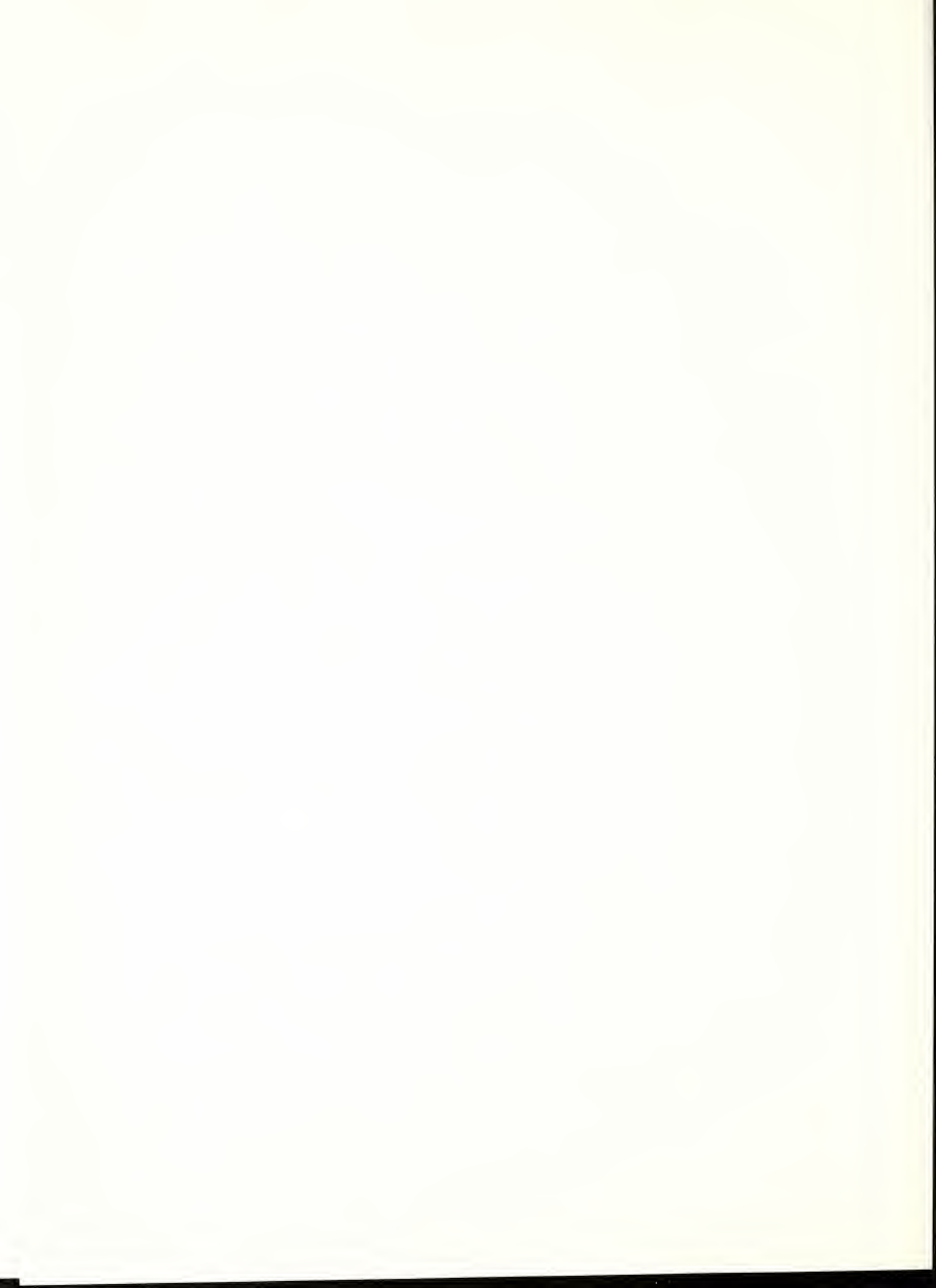
MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, they had baskets.

MR. BAKER: We had cane baskets. After the cane baskets we had a big bin about eight or ten feet long and it would be up by the checkout counter. And that was at all the Bowers stores. You'd have this cane basket with a handle on it and the woman put it over her arm and walked through the store.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: But you could call in a grocery order and the clerk would take it down. And in an hour or an hour and a half, depending on what time of day it was and what day of the week it was.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your delivery service like, Mr. Baker? Did you send it out by bicycle?

MR. BAKER: Bicycle. That was the only way we ever delivered. There was some of the stores that got the trucks and would deliver.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: But they were some of the bigger stores.

MR. BAKER: I can remember Seessel's used to have his trucks around. He did a big delivery business, but we always delivered on a bicycle.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your customers were fairly close, I guess.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right.

DR. CRAWFORD: So when they called an order in, you could send someone out.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: They were the neighborhood customers.

MR. BAKER: Had a delivery boy.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Lot of people didn't have cars and do a lot of traveling. You didn't go to the grocery store on the streetcar.

DR. CRAWFORD: Shopped in the neighborhood then?

MR. BAKER: That's right. Back then the delivery boys were mostly black. They were grown men.

They'd pay 'em a dollar a day to deliver groceries.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: I remember that, they sure did.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you start bringing in any way to deliver to deliver other than the bicycle? I know you did that at first.

MR. BAKER: Up until WWII, 1943 or 42, then labor began to get scarce. Everything was gearing up for the war. I would say about 1941. They stopped delivering in all the stores. And some of them thought that the store wouldn't do any business. Didn't think that they could make it. They



were doing such a delivery businessss. People just come on to the store.

DR. CRAWFORD: Still had to eat.

MR. BAKER: Still eating. And they just come on to the store. And when the war was over in 1945, nobody started back to delivering. Stores began getting bigger then. They wanted the bigger stores--more stores.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you start changing to bigger stores then?

MR. BAKER: Yes, the stores started getting bigger then to where if they had four, five on a corner, they'd consolidate. Just one or two, maybe.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: The store over on Barksdale, you increased the size of that a couple of times?

MR. BAKER: Three or four times.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Place in the back used to be a grease rack--a filling station.

MR. BAKER: There used to be a filling station, yes, sure did. Back in the '20s. Back in those days, they used to put a little ol' service station in the middle of the block. And they wouldn't do that now. You know, most all service stations are on a corner and have been for several years. But back in those days, they'd put one right in there--and this one was just a small station. But for that time, it was the thing.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Didn't have a lot of cars.



MR. BAKER: That's right. And they'd pull in there. A man could make a living, you know.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: A lot of them lived by the store too years ago.

MR. BAKER: Yes, right.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the layout of the store? How was it different from today? Where did you have the groceries located?

MR. BAKER: Before they started the self-service stores, everything was behind the counter. You'd come in the store and the middle of it would be vacant and would be where the customer come in. But there was counters running all up and down the store on both sides. And the shelves would be in back. We'd stock the shelves with canned corn, beans, boxes of oatmeal and cornflakes. They'd put them way up top, and have that hook thing to get them down.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a stick with a hook on the end of it, wasn't it?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Had to be good with it. Pulled one down, you could pull three or four down. You had to get the top one.

MR. BAKER: Those things, I wish I had saved one of those. They were made with a tong. You'd use the handle and mash it to grip it.



DR. CRAWFORD: Had a rubber knob or some kind of gripper.

MR. BAKER: It was metal. But I don't know just how it was made. But it would reach up high and get a box or can or something like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Saved you from a lot of climbing, didn't it?

MR. BAKER: Yes, right.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: But it didn't save you from a lot of climbing to put it up though.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, had to get it up there first.

MR. BAKER: I don't remember much about stocking. But I do remember in the back of the counter, they had them built--under the counter was the drawers they'd pull out. They'd have beans--dried nothern beans, pinto beans, rice and this type stuff. And they'd come in and want a pound or two pounds of great northern beans. You'd reach over and get a sack and bag it. They'd have their scale up there and bag it. You didn't get the stuff pre-packaged like now. Everything now comes already packaged at the store.

DR. CRAWFORD: They bought it mostly in a sack or something. It just wasn't pre-packaged like it is now.

MR. BAKER: That's right. We didn't get cookies--they came in caddies. They were big boxes, pretty good sizes. And we'd put them up in racks and they had a glass thing.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: A glass cover.

MR. BAKER: Yes, and you'd take it off the one and when you refilled it, you'd put the new box up and



put that glass cover on there. And people would come in there and "graze" on your cookies. They'd open the glass and get them a cookie out. That's right. They'd graze on it. That was a big joke and they liked that.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's sort of a benefit they'd get to come in the store. Now, anytime they'd want something, you brought it out to them.

MR. BAKER: Yes, that's right. They'd come in with their grocery list--a can of tomatoes. And you'd reach back, "Yes, 'um. what else? "

"A can of corn."

"Yes, it's down here." Reach and get a can of corn.

DR. CRAWFORD: You'd fill a whole order. They'd stay right there.

MR. BAKER: Want a box of washing powder? And you knew right where everything was. They'd walk around and wait on them until you get it all.

DR. CRAWFORD: They didn't have as many different brands as they do now, did they?

MR. BAKER: Not near as many. No.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Nor sizes, neither.

MR. BAKER: Matter of fact, I don't think there was but one size for canned corn. That Pride of Illinois corn we used to handle. That was mostly a #2 can, then. I don't believe they even had the little 8 oz. can.



DR. CRAWFORD: It was made family-sized, wasn't it?

MR. BAKER: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, did you know Clarence Saunders?

MR. BAKER: I knew of him. I knew when he was in business here in Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, he was in a little bit before you even started, wasn't he?

MR. BAKER: Yes, right. Matter of fact, I think Clarence Saunders opened up--seemed like they said the Piggly Wiggly started up in about 1917 or 1918 or somewhere along in there.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he had two others, Keedoozle and Sole Owner of My Name.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: When he first went broke, then he came back in and he wanted to make sure he owed no one a thing. That's where he got the title, "Clarence Saunders, Sole Owner of My Name." In other words, he didn't owe a penny to anybody. He'd been broke and was on the way up. Second time he started Keedoozle, it was really gonna be an automated store and they're gonna have one, one of these days, anyhow, if he'd had a little more backing. Of course, a lot of the big people in the grocery business didn't want him to do that because they could see the "handwriting on the wall". They'd have to change their stores and everything.

MR. BAKER: What year was that, do you think?



MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, the Keedoozle, when I left Memphis,
[they] were working on it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was that--the early forties?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yes, at Jefferson and Third. Had a key and
you went in there.

MR. BAKER: Yeah, I can remember that. But I couldn't
remember the year. But like you say, I think
he had the idea and that's the coming thing yet. I'm not
ruling out that we won't get automation in stores.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Think of all the things you could save. See,
they stock the stuff in on conveyors and all
you'd do is punch it and save all this. Put a big open box
of beans down there.

MR. BAKER: I understand they had to have too many
mechanics on duty to keep it operating.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: That's okay. That's true.

DR. CRAWFORD: A little complicated for the time. Maybe a
little early for the time.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: But think of people going in buying what they
want to like what they want to like they do
now. They pick this up and they don't like this size and
they set it down and pick up something else. Think of how
the grocery business has evolved to where it is all customer
oriented--one hundred percent customer oriented.

DR. CRAWFORD: Doesn't that use fewer laborers and don't you
get by with fewer people now?



MR. BAKER: Oh, yes.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, labor is your big cost.

MR. BAKER: Yes, labor is the biggest cost. But, you know now, they've gone to now where the newest trend is--you know the Megamarket over here--you sack your own groceries now.

DR. CRAWFORD: On American Way?

MR. BAKER: Yes, that's right. They've got one checker who can handle two customers at a time. They just put one out and go on down [the conveyor slides the groceries off to one side so that the customer can sack his own groceries and the checker handles the next customer immediately]. Now I think that's gonna be the coming thing.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, a lot of the younger people coming up will do that. But people in the age group forty and on up, they're too used to having it bagged and somebody carrying it out to the car for them particularly the elderly people. But I believe, it will become more automated than it is today.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, they have some of that now don't they with the electronic check-out?

MR. BAKER: Yes, well, you know scanning is coming right along where you run an item over the scanner and it just picks up the prices. You can even get them to talk and tell you how much it is.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yours doesn't talk yet over on Madison yet, does it?

MR. BAKER: Yes, it talks.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: See, they own that Piggly Wiggly over on Madison that used to be where Fred Montesi's was.

MR. BAKER: Yes, those registers talk over there. Now, the ones we put in on North Watkins at that Big Star don't talk, but they beep. The talking ones cost about four or five thousand dollars extra to get.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Lot of people don't like that thing talking to them. They can't talk back to them. They'd rather have a friendly clerk!

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it was probably that way when they first started this thing and stopped delivering and taking orders on credit over the phone and people had to come and get their own. Don't you think they felt the same way?

MR. BAKER: Yes, talking about that, I can remember when before we ever had self-service meat, I can remember two or three told me "I can never buy meat like that." Didn't want it packaged. Come in and see the steaks, you cut up the steaks and see them packaged up. [They would say,]"I'll never buy my meat that way, I've got to see them cut it." That's the way they felt about it.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: They want to see the butcher cut it.

DR. CRAWFORD: But now you've got no choice.

MR. BAKER: No, that's right. They're getting back to it now, saying they've got a counter in where you can go in and tell the butcher what you want.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yeah, well the customer would go in and say, "Cut off all that suet. I don't want all that suet. I don't want all that suet." The butcher had to be real good.

MR. BAKER: That's right. They did a lot of trimming that they don't do now. But the labor costs-- there's such a difference in self-service meat. You know butchers make \$10, \$12, or \$14 an hour.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: That's what they used to make in a week!

MR. BAKER: Yes, I remember butchers made \$25 a week. That was more than a forty-hour week. But they didn't have a limit.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: They were some of the highest paid people in the store.

MR. BAKER: That's right. They were the highest paid.

DR. CRAWFORD: There was a skill there.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Not only skill, but they made a difference in the meat market making money or losing money.

Not with the thumb, but you've seen the old Norman Rockwell painting with the lady pushing up and the butcher pushing down on the scale. (laughter) A lot of truth in that, wasn't it, Ben?



MR. BAKER: (Laughter) I think there was a time when they could and did things like that and could get away with it. But I think people got on to that. There was a time back in the twenties when people began to get wise to that.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Scales are more accurate. Now they got the price on there. And it reads out in a digital number and you know exactly what that piece of meat costs.

MR. BAKER: You punch in the price per pound or the code number and put it on the scale andd it weighs it automatically now.

DR. CRAWFORD: And gives you what it is?

MR. BAKER: Yes, right.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did you begin to expand and begin to add the other stores?

MR. BAKER: It was after WWII. It was along about 1950 or '52 that Memphis began booming then. This (out here in Colonial Acres) that's where they were really building. People could buy a house, FHA, for \$8,000 or \$9,000 something like that. They wouldn't have to have much down and their notes wouldn't be bad, you know.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Five or six percent.

MR. BAKER: The loan, yes. Let's see, this house was built about 1960 right here and the rate of interest then was 5-3/4%.

DR. CRAWFORD: Good time to do it. They didn't stay that way, you know it.



MR. BAKER: Things were booming. I'd say after WWII, things really started booming.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why was that? People moving in or business doing better? What was the cause of that?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, during the war, many people lived two and three families to a house on account of the housing shortage.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's right. Couldn't buy a house or a car.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: A lot of the soldiers came home and got married and moved out on their own and they needed houses.

MR. BAKER: It was the big pent-up demand--built up there for about four or five years.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: You might say from starting '41 they didn't build any houses. From '41 to '45, they didn't build any houses.

DR. CRAWFORD: They weren't building cars then, you know.

MR. BAKER: That's right and they had to get caught up.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Last cars that were bought were of February of nineteen forty-two.

DR. CRAWFORD: There's a few '42 models around, but not many, mostly '41.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: We boarded with a lady out in California who had a '42 Oldsmobile hydromatic and they had just started. They bought the hydromatic from Nash.



DR. CRAWFORD: And were just putting it in. Yes, I remember a few '42s around.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: IM-24 tanks had cadillac engines with a hydro-matic transmission to it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, and that's what all the production was doing in the war. Working on that kind of thing.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: The cars they had on the line and the cars they had on the assembly and the parts they went ahead and had to manufacture those. That's why I said they came off about February of '42.

There was a big pent-up demand for houses too.

MR. BAKER: That's right. That's when they started on that Colonial Acres out there.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, I flew into Memphis Christmas Day of '45 coming back from the Philipines. And the next time I flew over Memphis was in '54 from Texas and I was amazed at houses all out in there. As a Boy Scout, we used to hike out there to the airport. It was a one-day hike and back--a ten mile hike.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, in the city it was housing developments?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yes, all built up.

DR. CRAWFORD: So that was when you had a lot of growth in the stores

MR. BAKER: Yes, in the fifties. That's when everything was really growing.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: That's when all the sons got smart enough to where they could run a store. So everyone of them went out and got a store.(Laughter) Ben, he stayed and ran the oldest store.

MR. BAKER: Yeah, things began to boom when everybody got back from WWII.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: How many times did you get robbed at your store? I don't mean with you in it, but other times.

MR. BAKER: Back in the thirties and forties you never even heard of a robbery.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: I'm talking about the seventies.

MR. BAKER: We were having robberies quite often (sixties and seventies). An armed robbery where they pulled a pistol on you just didn't happen back then in the forties, fifties and sixties. But we had a half dozen of them there.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did things change? When did this sort of thing start? Because I know the days when you could leave your car and your home unlocked and you didn't have any trouble were over. But when did all this stuff start?

MR. BAKER: I would say in the seventies is when it really [began]. Well, Martin Luther King was killed in 1968 and I think that was really the beginning.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: It started in the first of the seventies. People became a lot more mobile--both black



and white. [They] traveled to different neighborhoods. [They] used to live in their own neighborhoods. As you know, we interviewed Milton (Hampton) and he's talking about working down to Leonard's. He said, "They fired everybody for crap-shooting." Dr. Crawford asked him why he didn't get fired. And he said he was off that day. (laughter) They didn't catch him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Pretty good reason.

MR. BAKER: Crap-shooting. I know we used to--I can remember this. We used to have black delivery boys back in the thirties and they would have store change. And I remember two or three different times, we had one that was real bad. They'd go out and they'd meet blacks down in the alleys and shoot craps--lose the store change.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: See, you got a lady who would say she had a \$10 bill and the grocery bill was \$9 and they'd send a dollar change out with the groceries and he had to bring the money back. He had the truck. If they were paying cash as most of the time they did, he had to come back and check in right then, he didn't carry the day's receipts. If he did, they'd be gone. And then, you didn't fire them because you wanted them to work the money out.

MR. BAKER: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: So, that was a pretty safe habit to have.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: I don't know when dice were invented, but I bet they've been around a long, long time.



DR. CRAWFORD: I think they were invented before the Roman Empire.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, they gambled over Christ's robe. So what did they do? It didn't say what they did, but they could have been shooting craps or dice or something to that effect. Ever think about it?

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, they didn't have playing cards.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: No, they might have flipped coins. They said they gambled for it. So gambling could take many different forms. Didn't have cards, but we do know they had coins.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it generally safe up through the sixties before things changed?

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Fifteen or twenty years ago.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about these small family stores when they closed up on the corner to make room for a larger one? What would happen to those people, who owned the smaller stores?

MR. BAKER: I don't know about the smaller stores. But they'd get in a bigger store probably most of them. I know the Stepherson brothers up there at Cooper and Young, they had small stores. And the Helms brothers, but they're both dead now.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: The "mom and pop" store, if their offsprings-- the son or daughter--didn't run the store, or an in-law, they just got out of business.



MR. BAKER: That's right. Just sold out and folded up.

But shopping centers--that's what really changed the grocery stores in Memphis, when we started getting these shopping centers. As a matter of fact, we used to all go up town at Christmas. That's where you do your Christmas shopping, up town in the forties and even in the fifties. But when they started, and I don't know when the first shopping center was put in.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Lamar-Airways Shopping Center built by Herman Gruber and Company was the first shopping center.

MR. BAKER: What year was that?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Nineteen forty-seven.

MR. BAKER: Well, that was when the shopping centers started and they begin going I remember with Poplar Plaza going in out here and then the people just began not going up town. We just drove out here.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Right down here, you got a barbeque place, a big bowling alley, you to Hancock's, you got a grocery store, you got a drugstore--a Walgreen's--and you got a Baker's Big Star.

MR. BAKER: So it's gone into a shopping center where you got a bunch of stores. Back in the thirties and the forties, it wasn't like that. You had a drugstore on one corner and a barber shop.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was more on the corners then. And when you saw shopping centers coming in, what did you



think about that? What did you decide to do? Did you decide to move to locations and start new ones in the shopping centers?

MR. BAKER: When they started putting in a shopping center, they'd usually be somebody out to lease it out. They were gonna put in a big building in there. "Don't you want to have a grocery store in there?" They'd be looking for operators to take their buildings.

DR. CRAWFORD: You saw what was coming.

MR. BAKER: That was the coming thing. That's right. Things just changed. We just got away from a store on every corner to shopping centers and the stores were bigger.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did that change the supplier or wholesale market in any way?

MR. BAKER: No, I can remember when Malone & Hyde for years handled dry groceries. But then, they branched out and went into the produce business and opened up a produce department and a meat department.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: That used to be handled by A. S. Barbaro and D. Canale & Company.

MR. BAKER: That's right. Used to be handled by a separate produce house. But Malone & Hyde went in for all of it. They supplied the whole grocery store with everything, not only groceries, but produce and meat.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: They're the third largest wholesaler.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the United States?

MR. BAKER: They're third [largest] in the United States.
They're big all right.

DR. CRAWFORD: You've worked with them a long time, Malone & Hyde?

MR. BAKER: Always did business with them since we've been in the grocery business.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about this thing "Big Star" you say was developed by Malone & Hyde?

MR. BAKER: Yes, if you put in a store, they have the name. You just sign up with them and it is kind of a franchise deal. [It was] kind of like a Holiday Inn.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, do you own the buildings that your store is in or lease them?

MR. BAKER: Lease them. All of them [are] leased.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: But you own the merchandise and the equipment?

MR. BAKER: Yes, right.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: But that's a great big investment in six stores. Your shelves and your equipment alone.

MR. BAKER: To put in a store nowadays, it costs several hundred thousand dollars.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: Say, you open one, not counting the food, if you open one like you got over at White Station and Quince?

MR. BAKER: A new store that size?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yes, that size.

MR. BAKER: Seven or eight hundred thousand dollars.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: To start a store?

MR. BAKER: Right. Time you stock it, it would take a couple hundred thousand to stock it. You're talking about putting in fixtures, equipment and, man, that goes into money right quick. Yes, it would be close to a million dollars, I guess, now to put in a store.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much did you say your father spent when he started in?

MR. BAKER: Seven or eight hundred dollars was about the stock of the store.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: He came to Memphis as a carpenter, didn't he?

MR. BAKER: He had been carpentering.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: He told me he was going to work for the railroad, but they didn't hire him. You know they had a lot of wooden boxcars back in those days. Did a lot of woodwork.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were just changing to metal boxcars.

MR. BAKER: I just don't remember when he went to work for the old Bowers stores.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: He went to work for this one man who wanted him to do some carpenter work and he started clerking.

MR. BAKER: Is that how he got started?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, that's what he can remember.

MR. BAKER: I was too little to remember.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: This is something really nice to get down. Your dad has such varied experience as a school teacher before he came to Memphis. He had his carpenter tools and everything. From what he can tell me when I questioned him, he says, "I can't remember that any-more."

I said, "Well, it wasn't so long ago."

He said, "Of course, it is 75 years ago!" Not easy to remember when it's hard for you to remember what happened in the thirties and forties and the twenties.

MR. BAKER: Yes, it is.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Had five sons and all of them went in the grocery business and all of them was a big success, except this one.(Laughter) He's a big mess and oh, he's my buddy.

DR. CRAWFORD: Are you really retired from yours now, Mr. Baker?

MR. BAKER: Yes, I'm really retired. I just go out and see them. I don't do any work like I did. I don't know how to run these modern cash registers.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: He just went to work at 6 o'clock in the morning. He went over to the Farmers' Market at five. He had his El Camino and loaded it up with watermelons and parked it out in front of his store.

That night all the watermelons would be sold. He'd go over and get all these fresh vegetables and be over at the store at 5 or 6 o'clock and everybody else would still be sleeping. He didn't close up til seven or eight. We were going to have a meeting with him in there counting the cash. I said, "Hide that d--- stuff, boy. You're gonna get robbed." A month later he was robbed.

MR. BAKER: I started getting robbed.

DR. CRAWFORD: People just can't help but carry on old habits, you know like get up early.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: He had all kinds of arms in there. But that didn't stop people from coming in there beat him in the head. They were amateurs. Bound to have been! You know what the lieutenant told me? Well, he didn't tell me personally. I heard him talking to somebody else. It's an amateur. You had to only hit him once and knock him out. He was in the hospital awhile. You were so hard-headed you finally got out of the business. 'Bout to lose a good church member, you know. Your brothers, they don't stay in the stores anymore, do they?

MR. BAKER: No, they go to the office, but they don't actually work in the stores. We've got managers and all.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: It hasn't been but three or four years ago
since you were punching the cash registers.

MR. BAKER: Yeah, it's been about three or four years.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: You've only been retired a short while.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think you have worked long enough to deserve
. . .

MR. BAKER: Yes, well, I enjoy reading the U.S. News and
World Report. I get these ads in the mail and
I read Forbes Magazine and I take the Wall Street Journal.
That's a good little magazine, the U.S. News and World
Report.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you need to keep up.

MR. BAKER: Yes, you do. The stock market has come back
real good. Just last week, it's been kind of
down. I watch that stock market. I enjoy that.

DR. CRAWFORD: It has generally done well this last year.

MR. BAKER: Yes, it has. We've been in a bull market.

It was a business and we all worked in the store. We
grew up doing that and we just kept on doing it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Followed in your Dad's footsteps.

MR. BAKER: That's right.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: A young boy whose father was a doctor, he's
still got eight or ten years of schooling
ahead of him before he becomes a doctor. But in your case,
you can start working at the grocery store when you are eight
or ten years old 'til the time you're twenty. You'll know
something about it.



DR. CRAWFORD: On-the-job-training.

MR. BAKER: That's right. On-the-job-training. That's the way we felt.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: All of the boys went into the grocery business. You didn't have any sisters, did you?'

MR. BAKER: No.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: That's five boys.

MR. BAKER: Yeah, but the time you could reach that cash register, you wanted to punch that cash register. That was it.

DR. CRAWFORD: It looked like fun.

MR. BAKER: It did!

Yes, we were over there a number of years.

That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: You hated to see that one go, I guess.

MR. BAKER: Right. It was real hurting.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, the man that bought it. He's still got it? Doing all right?

MR. BAKER: Yes, doing good there now.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Now, he just bought the equipment, didn't he? He didn't buy the whole store, did he?

MR. BAKER: Well, we owned and got the building under lease to him. But he owns all the fixtures, the stock in there.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: Boy, that store had a lot of customers walking in those doors.

MR. BAKER: Over a period of time, it did. That's right. You know Kroger was in that building at one time. In that very building and we were down the street. And it was another man around the street there. That was when there was about three groceries on that one corner.

DR. CRAWFORD: None of them were big but they all had some business?

MR. BAKER: That's right. None of them were big.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Baker ran the rest of them all out of business.

MR. BAKER: (Laughter) No, Kroger got to going for bigger stores and closed up that one. It was bigger than the one we had down the street and so we moved up the street and expanded.

DR. CRAWFORD: That gave a bigger space?

MR. BAKER: That's right. Bigger store.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, you had a lot of square feet to this one at Quince and White Station.

MR. BAKER: Yes, that's right.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: It's into the deli business.

MR. BAKER: Yes, ten years. Now the trend is stores have to have a delicatessen and a bakery in the store. Back then it was unheard of.



DR. CRAWFORD: Styles come and go. Don't you think that might change again? Someone is going to start just offering groceries again?

MR. BAKER: I don't know. It could be that things will go back. You're right. Things do change back sometimes.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Well, Megamarket doesn't have a deli, do they?

MR. BAKER: Oh, yes, a big deli!

MAJ.SCHULTZE: The Food Depot doesn't have a deli, do they? over on Pershing?

MR. BAKER: I'm not familiar with that store.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: I've been in that store a couple of times.

MR. BAKER: I don't know. But most of the stores they've put in the last few years have bulk food. But I think this bulk food won't go over. In the barrels.

You've seen it in the stores. We've got it in that one over at the Piggly Wiggly.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Sam's Club sells it. Walmart down there on Getwell. You go in there and you want a can of peas and you've got to buy a number 10 can. If you want ketchup, you got to buy a gallon.

MR. BAKER: Big quantities, yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: They don't sell small amounts of it.

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Sell it by the case and big cans.

MR. BAKER: He's trying for volume and it's supposed to be cheaper by volume.



MAJ.SCHULTZE: He is the richest man in America. I guess he knows what he's doing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, who owns that?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Walmart. Sam Walton.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's called "Sam's", isn't it?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: "Sam's Club."

MR. BAKER: Don't they charge you to belong to it?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: No, they charge a wholesaler, but they don't charge an individual.

MR. BAKER: You mean an individual can go in there?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Yeah, but he has to have a card.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you have to do to get a card? You don't have to buy it?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: No, you just have to go in there and fill out an application.

DR. CRAWFORD: Then they give you one?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Then they give you a card. They charge you 5% above sales tax.

MR. BAKER: Does it look like they're making a success out of it?

MAJ.SCHULTZE: Oh, man, they got about ten checkout counters. People always standing by them. Always checking out. Ten doesn't sound like a lot.

MR. BAKER: They can run a lot of stuff through there.

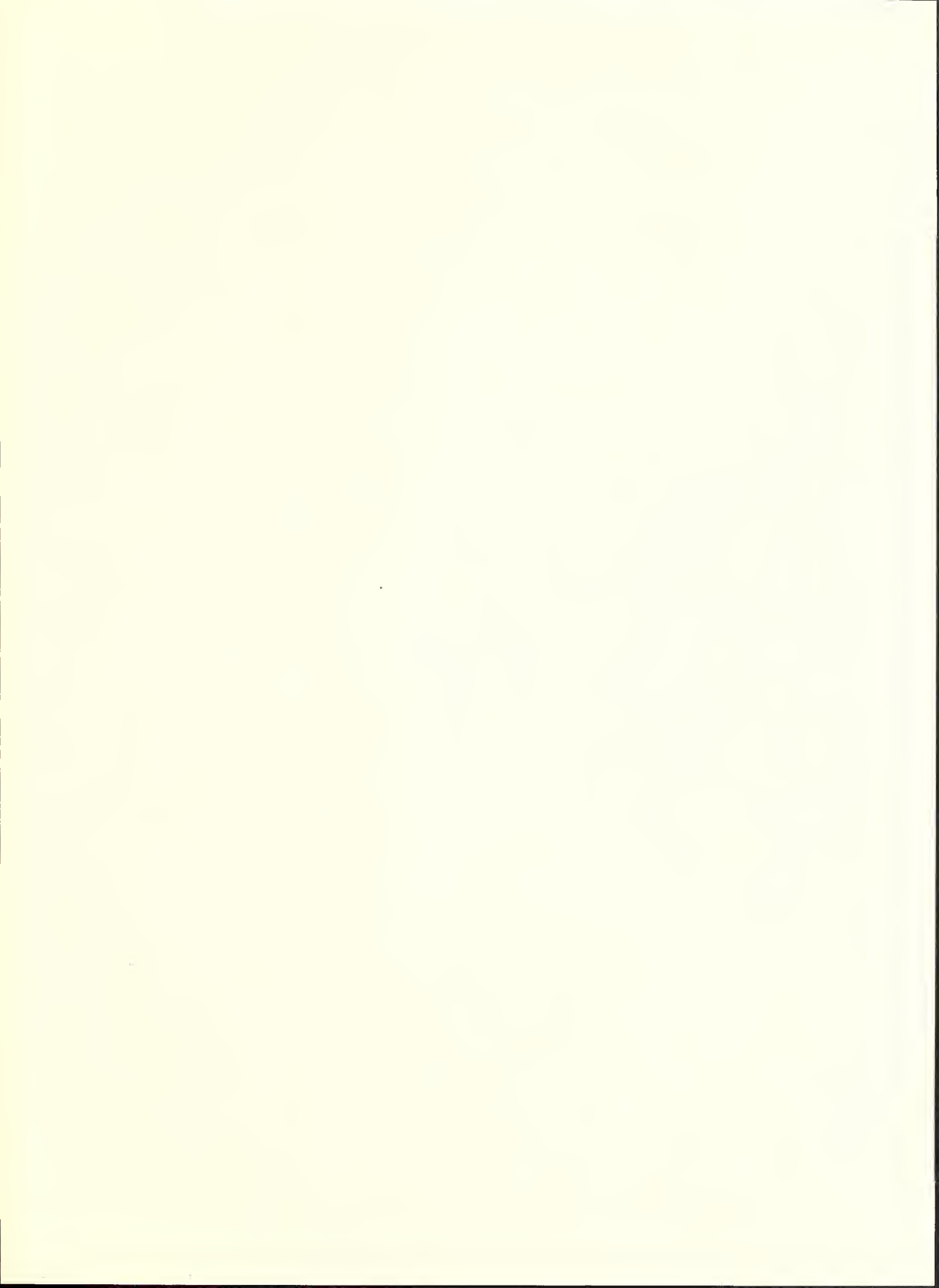
MAJ.SCHULTZE: Now the groceries they sell they don't sell produce. I mean all their meat is frozen. You buy a box of hamburger.



MR. BAKER: What they're trying to do is buy by volume.

 You know labor is high cost now. It's the highest cost. If they could put out that meat frozen. They could work on lots less profit.











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